

Programme: CertHE Skills for the Workplace Health and Social Care

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Task 1

The role of a Mental Health Support Worker involves supporting individuals who experience mental health difficulties in their daily lives. The role requires patience, empathy, and the ability to communicate effectively while working alongside other professionals. As a Year 1 Health and Social Care student, I am interested in applying for this role in the future, and this personal action plan has been developed to help prepare for the application process and interview. The plan identifies key skills required for the role, reflects on current strengths, recognises skill gaps, and outlines a Personal Development Plan (PDP). Three possible interview questions are also discussed.

Communication is one of the most important skills for a Mental Health Support Worker, as the role involves building trusting relationships with service users and working closely with other professionals. Clear communication helps ensure that service users feel listened to and understood. My communication skills have developed mainly through university seminars, which take place on weekends. During these seminars, students are encouraged to actively engage in discussions, group activities, and short presentations. Taking part in these sessions regularly has helped me become more confident when expressing my ideas and listening to others. I have also learned how to adapt my communication style when working with different people, which is particularly important in mental health settings.

Empathy is essential when supporting individuals with mental health difficulties, as service users may feel vulnerable or misunderstood. Through my health and social care modules, I have gained a better understanding of how mental health can affect people differently. Class discussions and case studies have helped me reflect on the importance of being non-judgemental and patient. I believe I can demonstrate empathy by listening carefully and responding in a respectful and supportive way, while still maintaining professionalism.

Safeguarding is a key responsibility in mental health care, as service users may be at risk of harm. In my first year of study, safeguarding has been discussed in several lectures and seminars, which has helped me understand the importance of recognising concerns and reporting them appropriately. I am aware that Mental Health Support Workers must follow policies and procedures to protect service users, and I understand the importance of sharing concerns with senior staff rather than trying to manage situations alone.

Mental Health Support Workers are required to work as part of a team, often alongside nurses, social workers, and other support staff. Through group work at university, I have developed basic teamwork skills such as sharing tasks, meeting deadlines, and listening to different opinions. While group work can sometimes be challenging, it has helped me learn how to cooperate with others and contribute fairly, which will be useful in a professional care setting.

Maintaining professional boundaries is important in mental health work to ensure safe and ethical practice. University learning has helped me understand the importance of confidentiality and appropriate behaviour when working with vulnerable individuals. I am aware that while being supportive is important, Mental Health Support Workers must not become too personally involved and should seek guidance when unsure.

Although I have begun developing several key skills, I have also identified areas where further improvement is needed. One important area for development is confidence in English language communication. English is not my first language, and at times this can affect my confidence when communicating, particularly in situations where clear and sensitive communication is required. In a mental health setting, misunderstandings could impact the quality of support provided to service users. I recognise that difficulties in fully understanding service users or clearly explaining information could reduce my confidence when approaching patients. To address this, I have been actively working to improve my English by reading more books in English and attending additional lessons focused on language development. Over the next six months, I plan to continue this approach and practise speaking English more frequently during seminars and group discussions, particularly during weekend sessions. Progress will be measured through increased confidence and clearer communication in both academic and practical settings.

A second area for development is limited practical experience in mental health settings. As a Year 1 student, most of my learning has been theoretical. While this has provided a strong foundation, I recognise the importance of gaining hands-on experience. To address this, I plan to apply for volunteering opportunities or entry-level roles within mental health or community support services within the next six months. This will allow me to apply theoretical knowledge in real situations and develop confidence when supporting individuals with mental health needs.

Another area for development is managing challenging behaviour. Although this has been introduced in lectures, I have not yet had the opportunity to apply de-escalation strategies in

practice. To improve this skill, I plan to complete online training courses related to managing challenging behaviour and conflict resolution within three to four months. I will evaluate my progress through self-reflection and any feedback received during training or practical experience.

Interview Questions and Responses

Question 1: Why do you want to become a Mental Health Support Worker?

I want to become a Mental Health Support Worker because I am interested in supporting individuals who experience mental health difficulties and helping them feel supported and respected. My studies in health and social care have increased my understanding of mental health and the importance of person-centred care, and I would like to develop these skills further in a practical setting.

Question 2: How would you communicate with a service user who appears anxious or distressed?

If a service user appeared anxious, I would remain calm and listen carefully to what they are saying. I would use clear and reassuring language and give them time to express themselves. If I felt the situation was becoming serious, I would follow procedures and report my concerns to a senior member of staff.

Question 3: How do you maintain professional boundaries in mental health work?

I maintain professional boundaries by following organisational policies, respecting confidentiality, and being aware of my role. If I was unsure about a situation, I would seek advice from a supervisor to ensure that I am acting appropriately.

In conclusion, this personal action plan highlights the key skills required for a Mental Health Support Worker role while recognising areas for further development. As a Year 1 student, I understand that developing these skills is an ongoing process. By following the Personal Development Plan outlined, I aim to improve my confidence, experience, and readiness for future employment in mental health care.

Task 2

Communication is a fundamental skill within health and social care and is particularly important in mental health settings. Effective communication supports the development of therapeutic relationships, promotes service-user safety, and ensures that care is delivered in a person-centred manner. This report explores the importance of communication as a key skill in health and social care, with a specific focus on mental health practice. It defines communication, examines its role in improving outcomes for service users, and considers its relevance to professional practice.

Communication in health and social care refers to the exchange of information between professionals and service users using verbal, non-verbal, and written methods. Effective communication involves not only speaking clearly but also active listening, observing non-verbal cues, and responding appropriately (Thompson, 2022). In mental health care, communication is especially important as service users may experience difficulties expressing emotions, thoughts, or concerns due to anxiety, distress, or mental illness (Bach and Grant, 2015). Both verbal communication, such as conversations and explanations, and non-verbal communication, including body language, eye contact, and tone of voice, play a significant role in supporting individuals. Poor communication can result in misunderstandings, reduced trust, and ineffective care delivery (Arnold and Boggs, 2020).

Effective communication is essential for building trust and rapport with service users in mental health settings. Trust allows individuals to feel safe when discussing sensitive or personal issues and encourages engagement with support services. Rogers (1957) emphasises that empathetic communication is central to developing therapeutic relationships, which are closely linked to positive mental health outcomes. Clear communication also supports accurate assessment and care planning, as professionals rely on service users' accounts to identify needs, risks, and appropriate interventions. Ineffective communication may result in important information being overlooked, which can place service users at risk (Department of Health and Social Care, 2018).

Communication is also vital for collaborative working within multidisciplinary teams. Mental health care often involves professionals from different disciplines, and effective communication ensures that information is shared accurately and consistently. This reduces the risk of errors

and supports continuity of care. The NHS identifies effective communication as a key factor in delivering safe and high-quality care across services (NHS England, 2021).

Person-centred care is a core principle of health and social care practice and relies heavily on effective communication. Person-centred approaches involve listening to service users, respecting their preferences, and involving them in decisions about their care (McCormack and McCance, 2017). Through effective communication, professionals are able to understand individual experiences and tailor care to meet specific needs. In mental health settings, person-centred communication can help reduce stigma and promote empowerment, encouraging service users to actively engage in their care and recovery (Barker, 2017).

In conclusion, communication is a vital skill in health and social care, particularly within mental health settings. Effective communication supports therapeutic relationships, improves service-user safety, promotes person-centred care, and enables effective teamwork among professionals. Developing strong communication skills is therefore essential for anyone working in health and social care, as communication directly influences the quality of care provided and outcomes for service users.

Task 3

The LCHS4009 Component 1 presentation focused on professional development in UK health and social care, using a SWOT analysis framework to explore strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The presentation examined personal skills such as communication, empathy, teamwork, and commitment to professional learning, while also identifying areas for improvement including limited experience in complex case management and maintaining professional boundaries. It also considered external factors such as access to CPD opportunities, workforce shortages, and the risk of burnout within the sector. The aim of the presentation was to demonstrate understanding of professional development and reflect on how SWOT analysis can support career planning in health and social care.

The presentation was delivered using structured slides with clear headings, bullet points, and academic references. Overall, the experience of preparing and delivering the presentation was challenging but valuable, as it required combining academic knowledge with self-reflection and presenting this information clearly to an audience.

While preparing the presentation, I felt reasonably confident about the content, particularly when discussing strengths such as communication and empathy, as these areas link closely to my studies and interests in health and social care. Using the SWOT framework helped me organise my ideas in a clear and logical way, which made the content easier to present. I believe one strength of my performance was the clarity of the slides, as they were well-structured and supported by relevant academic sources, which helped maintain a professional tone throughout the presentation.

However, during the delivery of the presentation, I felt nervous at times, particularly when explaining weaknesses and threats. This affected my confidence and delivery, and I sometimes relied too heavily on the slides rather than speaking more freely. This may have reduced audience engagement. Additionally, while the content was well-researched, some points could have been explained in more depth verbally, rather than remaining at a descriptive level. This limited the critical analysis during delivery, even though the slides themselves showed awareness of wider sector issues such as workforce shortages and emotional exhaustion in health and social care.

Reflecting on my communication skills, I realised that confidence plays a significant role in effective presentation delivery. Although communication is identified as one of my strengths,

presenting in an academic setting still feels challenging, particularly when English is not my first language. This sometimes made me worry about wording and pronunciation, which distracted me from focusing fully on my delivery. Despite this, completing the presentation helped me recognise the progress I have made so far and highlighted areas that require further development.

To improve future presentations, I plan to focus on increasing my confidence and reducing reliance on slides. One action I will take is to practise presentations more frequently, both independently and with peers, to become more comfortable speaking without reading directly from slides. I will also work on summarising key points verbally to ensure that explanations are clear and engaging.

Another action is to continue developing my communication skills by actively participating in seminar discussions and group activities, particularly during weekend seminars where student engagement is encouraged. This will help improve fluency, confidence, and clarity when speaking in academic and professional settings. Additionally, seeking feedback from tutors and peers after presentations will help identify specific areas for improvement.

When lecturer feedback becomes available, I will use it to inform further development, particularly in relation to presentation structure, depth of analysis, and delivery style. By reflecting on feedback and engaging in ongoing professional development, I aim to improve my presentation skills and confidence in future assessments and professional contexts.

References

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